Perspectives on Culture, Values, and Justice

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Edited by

Chandana Chakrabarti
and Tommi Lehtonen

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PREFACE

CHANDANA CHAKRABARTI

Culture, values and justice are of fundamental importance in our lives. As we pursue different professions to make a living we also engage in a wide variety of activities such as singing, dancing, sculpting, painting, filming, acting, writing, researching and so on, that are expressions of the creativity and free spirit of the human mind. As embodiments of our creativity and free spirit, these flow from the inner core of our being and nature. Being founded in our very essence, culture is crucially also connected with our basic values, including our understanding of fairness, rights and responsibilities as participants of various institutions and members of social groups. Man is a social animal as it is famously said and our culture plays a large role, not only in our individual lives but also in our social lives. Since culture is critically important for individual lives, social interactions, as well as even the life of a nation, values and justice are intimately linked to culture. Oppressive governments where the power base is highly concentrated in a small group without free and fair representation of the people have, throughout the ages, routinely imposed draconian censorship and sanctions in violation of our core values, rights, and principles of justice. Such repression has resulted in widespread regression in culture, values and justice and consequent lack of progress and general degradation, as our history amply shows. On the other hand, governments deriving their authority from popular mandate have traditionally been supporters and custodians of our fundamental values and rights and cultural freedom resulting in spontaneous flourishing of the individual, the society and the nation as our history also clearly shows.

However, perceptions of culture, values and justice are often widely divergent and it is immensely important to recognize the role of perspectives in any systematic study of these phenomena. In a way, the appreciation and evaluation of perspectival differences is critically related to the celebration of the autonomy of individuals, societies and nations. At the same time, the very recognition of differences presupposes the framework of a common understanding and exchange of ideas that can foster mutual respect, trust and cooperation. Indeed, in this volume

scholars drawn from a wide range of disciplines have discussed a variety of perspectives and issues to give credence to such sharing and fruitful collaboration and support.

I wish to express my deep gratitude to one of my best friends and long-time colleagues, Professor Tommi Lehtonen of the University of Vaasa, Finland, for his unwavering dedication and effort to edit this book. Professor Lehtonen is not only a renowned scholar of comparative culture, religion and philosophy but also a great teacher. In spite of his teaching commitment he had the patience and persistence to prepare this book for publication. I also wish to thank Professor Lehtonen's colleagues at the University of Vaasa who took interest and gave support in hosting the conference that led to this book being published in such a short time. Needless to say, I cannot thank enough our advisory board members and other participants who attended and presented so many wonderful and thought provoking papers in our conference at the University of Vaasa sponsored by the Faculty of Philosophy and co-directed by Professor Lehtonen. It is our sincere hope that this publication will contribute significantly to enhancing scholarly interest in the comparative and critical study of perspectives on culture, values and justice which is a topic of burning interest in the contemporary world.

INTRODUCTION

TOMMI LEHTONEN

Culture and values are integral to our identity and are the essence of who we are and what we do. Therefore, it can be said that people build culture and that values are the building blocks. Moreover, culture and values are significant components of communities, but each culture's values are not static; they evolve over time.

Culture and values are closely related in that they share a normative aspect. To say that something is normative means that it concerns not just what is the case, but also what should be the case. Human rights, for example, are normative in this sense.

Interestingly, culture and values are concepts that are used not only in cultural studies and philosophy, but increasingly more in business life as well. Many firms say that culture and values are key to sustainable business, the most important competitive advantage, and therefore at the heart of success. Scholars in the humanities often emphasize instead that culture and moral values are not merely means to some end, but also ends in themselves.

Culture and justice are associated with humanity as the bridge between personality and animality. Additionally, culture and justice are indicators by which the well-being of society can be, at least to some extent, measured. Culture is about our collective identity, while justice protects society and guards the individual, offers comfort to those who have been harmed, and provides a warning to those who would harm others.

The impetus for this collection of essays was the informative discussions that took place at an international philosophy conference sponsored by the Society for Indian Philosophy and Religion. The conference, entitled Culture, Values, and Justice, was held at the University of Vaasa, Finland, in May 2014.

Three central issues of interest to scholars in philosophy, cultural studies, religious studies, and related disciplines arose out of the intellectual milieu of the conference. The purpose of this volume is to explore those issues: 1) justice and human rights, 2) ethics and values, and 3) learning from cultural diversity.

Part One focuses upon justice and human rights, which are core topics of ethics and political philosophy and important issues in social life. In recent decades we have witnessed a multitude of increasingly urgent demands for social justice and for the protection of human rights. Such demands stem from, among other things, the frequent perception that actual social realities contradict our concept of a good human life. To the extent that ideas of justice and human rights are seen as interdependent, the relationship between them is usually described as one where human rights are a way of achieving social justice. Thus, social justice is the larger goal, and human rights standards are a statement of what constitutes social justice. Our volume includes three essays (Tommi Lehtonen: "Justice Expressed as the Capacity to Change the Point of View", Mark Wood: "Human Rights and Earth Democracy", and Gordon Haist: "Justice, Reconciliation, and the Differend in the Margin") that explore the meaning and requirements of justice and human rights.

Tommi Lehtonen's paper, "Justice Expressed as the Capacity to Change the Point of View", defends the view that the realization of justice requires a sensing and tracking ability regarding morally relevant features of human activities and social environments. As such, this sensibility is an essential constituent element of the point of view of justice. A person's ability to change their point of view and to see a situation from another's point of view are identified in this chapter as major epistemological and psychological requirements for justice. That such changes are possible is derived from an analysis of the constituent elements of the concept of point of view. The concept of subjective, global multi-attractiveness is proposed to offer a new understanding of how sympathy for opposing views affects decision-making.

Mark Wood's article "Revolutionizing Human Rights" does three things. First, it examines the cultural, political, and economic forces that impede the full and universal realization of the rights codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Second, it describes a variety of contributions being made at both national and local levels to the construction of a way of global life that is guided by and supports human rights in the context of respecting and caring for the Earth. Third, it describes how these contributions presuppose and propose a shift in our understanding of the nature and relationship between individuals, rights, the socio-natural world and our practical definitions of what is the "good" life.

Gordon Haist's essay discusses the difference reconciliatory justice makes to our concept of justice. The author argues that reconciliation requires that the foundational concepts aligned with justice be rethought. In particular, the pluralism implicit in reconciliatory justice no longer privi-

leges judgmental objectivity, whether contractual or otherwise, and problems of memory, collectivity, and the acceptance of others emerge out of the very effort to reconcile post-war opposites. Concerning justice, this leads to a rethinking of speculative distance and to a new question of how restoration "happens".

Part Two focuses on ethics and values, two inextricably intertwined topics. Values are at the core of moral choices, and an understanding of the role of values in choices can clarify many issues related to ethics. Ethics and values are also core components of the development of cultural traditions. In our text we adopt a pluralistic approach to examining ethical and value questions and learn much from the interaction between Western and Eastern methods of ethical inquiry. Our volume includes four essays that explore this topic in depth and from a variety of cross cultural perspectives: Joel Wilcox: "Is Human Behavior Natural?", Kisor Chakrabarti: "Perspectives on Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide: East and West", Maxine Freed: "The Interrelationship of Buddhist Ethics, Interdependence, and Mindfulness", and Christoph Parry: "The Literary Canon and Its Role in the Construction and Communication of Collective Identities".

Joel Wilcox's essay shows that the question of the naturalness of human actions is fundamental to the resolution of three long-standing issues in environmental ethics. The first concerns what is designated as the "natural agency objection" (NAO) to environmental ethics. According to the NAO, human beings are naturally constituted so as to ruin their environment. The NAO is an issue because, if it is sound, then environmental ethics is a fantasy. The second issue is the difficulty of formulating a defensible definition of wilderness. Clearly, wilderness as "a place uninhabited by humans" is a modern abstraction, but it is not clear what should take its place. Yet a definition of wilderness is obviously necessary for various purposes in environmental ethics. The third issue concerns the degree to which human beings are cultural beings.

Kisor Chakrabarti's article "Perspectives on Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide: East and West" discusses the debate over euthanasia in a number of countries worldwide. The main focus is, however, on the traditional Hindu perspective. While suicide is generally prohibited from the traditional Hindu viewpoint, permissible exceptions and their reasons are widely discussed in classical Hindu writings, including scriptures, epics, treatises on moral and social prescriptions, and medical texts that permit a physician to suspend treatment when it is futile and the disease incurable. The author shows how the theory of reincarnation and the traditional Hindu views of the social standard and the moral norm that includes acting

selflessly for being ethical have informed the discussion. The author also addresses the important role played by considerations of one's ability or inability to improve one's future and how these Hindu views are relevant to the modern debate on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide.

Maxine Freed's article "The Interrelationship of Buddhist Ethics, Interdependence, and Mindfulness" considers some of the ways Buddhist metaphysics and epistemology intersect with and "drive" its ethics. Mindful observation of our mental, emotional, and physical processes enables us to see the fundamentally relational and interdependent character of existence. This profound awareness of how things truly are leads to compassion for all who suffer and to the motivation, intention, and skilful actions to relieve that suffering.

Christoph Parry's essay "The Literary Canon and Its Role in the Construction and Communication of Collective Identities" examines the way in which certain novels become canonised, forming a frame of reference for public debate. In a further step examining the relationship between national and transnational canons, the role each can play in consolidating collective identities is discussed. While providing for the intimacy of the individual reading experience, works of literature also create a shared space in the public sphere for debating mores and values, thus greatly contributing to the formation of collective identities.

Part Three concludes with three essays devoted to the topic of cultural diversity and learning from cultural differences. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. Indeed, cultural diversity is a property of the entire community, just as biodiversity is a property of the entire ecosystem. Therefore, understanding and learning from cultural diversity is as central to social and cultural stewardship as protecting and restoring is to biological diversity. Cultural diversity as a normative concept is thus based on the view that cultural identities should not be discarded or ignored, but rather maintained and valued. Here we will have Wajeha Al-Ani's "Cultural Diversity Management in International and Private Schools in the Sultanate of Oman", Ilana Maymind's "Learning from the Past: Exile and Ethics", and Andreas Bock and Saskia Eschenbacher's "Reinforcing Threats: The Iranian Nuclear Crisis and Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory as an Alternative Approach to Cope with Crises".

Wajeha Al-Ani's essay discusses the core values embedded in the vision and mission statements of international schools in the Sultanate of Oman. The quantitative data were collected from a sample of twenty schools' headmasters using semi-structured interviews which was devel-

oped to include both closed and open-ended questions. The close-ended questions were targeted to collect data about the school environment. The results of the study show that the most common values in the international schools are cooperation, solidarity, sharing, equal opportunity for all, and compassion. However, in the area of personnel management, the most common values are human relations, acceptance, respect, tolerance, and friendship.

Ilana Maymind's essay focuses on two medieval thinkers: Shinran (1173–1262), the founder of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, and Maimonides (1136–1204), a Jewish philosopher. What is common to both is that their conditions of exile enhanced their sense of tolerance and compassion and informed their respective ethical systems. Maymind demonstrates that Shinran's and Maimonides's respective ethical approaches stemmed from their own personal struggles and their need to reinvent and rethink their approaches to their own lives and the lives of those around them. To the contemporary reader their heart-felt approaches provide insight that can be easily extrapolated to modern conditions where issues of displacement, relocation, and reintegration into a new environment continue to take place.

Finally, in Andreas Bock and Saskia Eschenbacher's essay the authors argue that it is not the availability of weapons but the warlike intent that constitutes a military threat. For example, the aggressive intentions the United States and Israel believe to be held by the regime in Teheran make the prospect of Iranian nuclear weapons threatening. Consequently, threats are socially constructed against the background of the experiences of states. Here Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory comes into play, describing and explaining the processes of how reality is constructed in response to our frames of reference or meaning perspectives—as the structure of assumptions and expectations through which our impressions are filtered.

It is my wish that the reader finds, within the book, food for thought, a growth in perspective, and a greater understanding of culture, values, and justice.

PART ONE:

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Chapter One

Justice Expressed as the Capacity to Change the Point of View

Tommi Lehtonen

Introduction

In his *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845), Marx wrote that though philosophers have explained the world in various ways, the point is to change it. This was Marx's comment on the philosophy that had preceded him—a view upholding the emancipatory task of philosophy that has inspired subsequent thinkers not only in Marxist circles, but more generally. For us, the question of the practical significance of philosophy is central to any discussion of the concept of justice, a topic that has endured since Plato and Aristotle.

The idea of justice then lies at the heart of moral and political philosophy. In recent decades, it has also become a prominent topic in philosophically-oriented cultural studies. In this respect, Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) was a landmark event, while Amartya Sen's *Identity and Violence* (2007) and *The Idea of Justice* (2009) represent a more recent voice in the debate on the concept of justice in intercultural settings.

Concerning the concept of justice, the following issues have been widely discussed in both classical and modern literature:

(1.a) The definition of justice;
(1.b) The various types of justice;
 (2)   The principles and procedures of justice; and
 (3)   The requirements for and barriers to a cosmopolitan concept of justice.

The definition of justice goes hand in hand with the classification of different types of justice, for different divisions add particular features to different definitions. In turn, different types of justice entail different principles and procedures for realising justice. Of the above list, the last issue is the most recent one and concerns the generalisability and tradition-dependence of different concepts of justice. This paper addresses that issue and discusses the concept of justice from the viewpoint of epistemological and psychological requirements. The discussion will reveal that the ability to change one's point of view is a key requirement for justice. This view is based on two premises. One, reconciling interests, rights, and needs is essential for realising justice. Two, different interests are important constituent elements of different points of view. It follows then that reconciliation of interests indeed requires that different points of view be taken into account.

In the Western tradition since Aristotle, justice has been identified in terms of both obeying laws and treating everyone with fairness. Though the relationship between law and justice has been a matter of controversy ever since, far less attention has been paid to the epistemological and attitudinal parameters for justice. A few relatively recent attempts in that direction have been made by John Rawls (1971) and Alasdair MacIntyre (1988).

In his *A Theory of Justice* (1971), Rawls set out to discover the principles that any society must embrace if it is to be just. According to Rawls, the question of justice arises in circumstances in which a scarcity of resources prevails—thus in effect all circumstances (*A Theory of Justice* §22; Rawls 1999a, 110). Rawls famously characterised justice as fairness, as well as stating that justice is what free and equal persons would agree to as basic terms of social cooperation. In Rawls's view, justice requires a fair equality of opportunity, and he considered justice as the principal virtue of social institutions (*A Theory of Justice* §1; Rawls 1999a, 3). One could add that justice is also a necessary virtue of people in their interactions.

According to Rawls's principles, justice first requires equal basic liberties and fair opportunities for all. Second, social and economic inequality can only be justified when it benefits the least advantaged (*A Theory of Justice* §§ 13, 46; Rawls 1999a, 53, 266). Rawls derives these principles by arguing that they would be chosen by free persons in an "original position" behind a "veil of ignorance". As is well known, the idea of the "original position" is proposed to prevent people from making unfair use of their natural and social advantages (*A Theory of Justice* §§ 3, 4, 24; Rawls 1999a, 11, 17, 118–123). Rawls thus assumes that his principles of justice

arise from a properly defined "original position" and accord with moral intuitions. Rawls uses the term "reflective equilibrium" to describe the accordance of a suitable "original position" with moral judgements.

Alasdair MacIntyre, for his part, defines justice as "a disposition to give to each person, including oneself, what that person deserves and to treat no one in a way incompatible with their deserts" (MacIntyre 2003, 39). By extension, the present paper argues that the disposition of justice as described by MacIntyre requires at least two things: namely the ability to change one's point of view (from one's own thoughts and feelings to other people's interests) and a sympathetic attitude toward one's opponents' views. These are the fundamental epistemological and attitudinal requirements for justice upon which I will focus in what follows. To begin, we need a better overview of the general features of the concept of justice, as clarified by the following definition and delineation of different types of justice.

'Justice' defined and different types of justice

The above-mentioned epistemological and attitudinal requirements for justice include information and sentiments necessary for identifying and distinguishing just and unjust acts and circumstances. Though the criteria for and principles of justice do not necessarily include any direct reference to emotions such as moral indignation and satisfaction, it would thus seem strange, even inhumane, to consider the sense of justice (or injustice) as irrelevant to evaluations of justice. Accordingly, I consider justice to be a complex concept that involves not only normative and evaluative aspects, but also an affective aspect. These different aspects are constituent elements of the viewpoint of justice.

Each person, as well as every tradition, has its particular and situated (i.e. time- and place-bound) point of view. This fact is a common starting point for refuting, or at least casting doubt upon, the possibility of seeing reality from another person's or tradition's point of view. However, I will defend the stance that constituent elements of a point of view can be changed incrementally, a change which can occur either by using other elements of a tradition or by adopting new elements from another tradition. Such perspectival change is a necessary requirement for justice that I define (for reasons I shall clarify later) as *a dynamic capability to take another person's or group's interests equally into account*. Thus, justice is defined here from the point of view of moral and cognitive abilities of persons, and not—at least not directly—as an ethical characteristic of actions and circumstances. Similarly, Aristotle considered justice to be a

character trait and the supreme virtue that, if cultivated, leads to a happy life (*EN* V, 1, 1129b27–29; Aristotle 1999, 69). Regarding the different types of justice, the proposed definition fits best with distributive justice because in that type of justice, attention is directed to different persons' interests and merits.

As stated earlier, the relationship between law and justice has been a controversial topic since Aristotle and a complex issue for many reasons. First, laws can be changed—some more readily than others—and different laws and conventions have effect in different countries and cultures at different times. Meanwhile, the general concept of justice tends to be more stable than individual laws. Second, the criteria for fairness are manifold. A decision can be fair because it treats people equally or because it takes into account the merits or needs of the people concerned. However important, elements of justice, equality, merit, and need are difficult to reconcile. Third, determining the common criteria for justice is difficult, if not impossible, under the conditions in which different traditions and various concepts of rationality exist.

In Western philosophy, justice has traditionally been defined by the Latin tag *suum cuique tribuere* or "to (give) each his or her due" (derived from Plato's *Republic* I, 331e). Accordingly, justice has always been closely connected to the ideas of desert and equality. Rewards and punishments are justly distributed if they go to those who deserve them. In the absence of different desert claims, justice demands equal treatment.

Justice is often something that we notice only when it is absent. In this sense, justice is made necessary by "circumstances of injustice" that arise, for example, from conflicting demands for material goods and irreconcilable objectives. Domination is an example of action that may distort justice and give rise to injustice; by extension, oppression is unjust. Iris Young therefore forcefully rejects various views of justice that focus on distribution and says that a conception of justice should instead begin with the concepts of domination and oppression (Young 2011, 3).

Another division of justice concerns compensation for damage and punishment for crimes, or *corrective* justice and *retributive* justice, respectively. Retributive justice concerns when and why punishment is justified, while corrective justice concerns the fairness of demands for civil damages.

Distributive justice, on the one hand, concerns the concept of just principles for the distribution of benefits and non-punitive burdens. This type of justice is the focus of Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. Distributive justice thus concerns the fairness of the distribution of resources. *Commutative* justice, on the other hand, concerns the fairness of wages, prices, and ex-

changes. Obviously, commutative justice and distributive justice are related, since people's wages influence their level of resources. Suffice it to say, Marx was interested in both forms of justice and advocated distributing resources according to needs, not merits.

Formal justice is the impartial and consistent application of laws and other principles, regardless of the justness of the principles themselves. To again refer to Iris Young's view, formal justice—though important—is not enough. A merely formal concept of justice lacks a substantive view of rights and duties, let alone needs. Here, *substantive* justice is closely associated with rights: what people can legitimately demand of one another or of their government. In the Kantian view, an inherent symmetry exists between rights and duties, in the sense that if one has a right, then others have a corresponding duty to respect that right.

In what follows, I focus on distributive justice. It has been said that the only universal principle of distributive justice is the demand that respect be given to different shared understandings (Walzer 1983, 29, 79, 313). This principle can be reformulated to hold that respect be given to cultural pluralism and cultural autonomy. Accordingly, no community or tradition ought to impose its own understanding of a given good upon any other community with different views. Critics argue that adhering to this principle will lead to cultural and ethical relativism. As cultural relativism in ethics can be formulated to claim in essence that different cultures have different moral codes, it follows that there is no objective truth in morality. In this sense, right and wrong are indeed mere matters of opinion, which vary from culture to culture (Rachels 2003, 20). However, it is doubtful that any society is so homogeneous that it maintains a single, coherent, and uncontested understanding of the meaning of each of its social goods.

In the history of thought about justice, the most common justification of any given set of laws, conventions or practices has been that they promote some good. Regarding the presuppositions of the present paper, *egalitarian justice* is a general framework, the theories of which begin with the premise that justice provides a framework by which people with competing ideas of the good can live together without conflict. Here, the basic idea of egalitarianism is that justice exists to regulate the interactions of free and equal persons. This may sound good, but it is by no means uncontested. All theories of egalitarian justice are faced with problems of grounding the commitment to the fundamental equality of persons.

In liberal theory, individual liberty is regarded as the highest political good. Aristotle already thought that the foundation of a democratic state is liberty (*Pol.* VI, 2, 1317a40; Aristotle 1998, 231). The priority of individual liberty is based on the equality of status that all citizens enjoy in re-

gimes organised according to liberal principles. This equality of moral status is attributed to all persons because they are rational, autonomous agents—an idea whose most famous advocate is Kant. Thus, the substantial concept of the person assumed in liberal theory is that of an independent rational agent, who has the capacity to reflect upon and alter their choices by way of rational reasoning. This agent also has the capacity to form commitments with others and with traditions, religions, families, nations, and so on (Christman 2002, 7).

The protection of individual liberty—particularly the freedom to formulate and revise one's own concept of the good life—is fundamental to the liberal democratic paradigm. It follows from this that freedoms of association, speech and privacy (also mentioned in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948) are of fundamental importance. These liberties and the ideals of the liberal state, including liberty, equality and justice, however ambiguous and controversial, are not insubstantial. Therefore, the point of view represented and promoted by the liberal state is not, strictly speaking, an anonymous point of view. Instead, it is related to broader interests, commitments and conceptions of the human good.

In his *The Law of Peoples* (1999), Rawls says that the arguments for his principles of justice (as presented in *A Theory of Justice*) will not be compelling for people whose political culture does not even latently draw upon these ideas (Rawls 1999b, 12–16, 37–38). This argument entails the idea that some societies that violate fundamental equality can be just on their own terms (i.e. in some non-egalitarian sense). The advocates of more straightforwardly egalitarian theories of justice maintain, however, that equal treatment and consideration of different personal rights and needs are universally binding and valid for all societies.

Under the conditions of cultural pluralism, the role of justice in an egalitarian framework is to provide fair guidelines for the pursuit of different conceptions of the good. In this view, in which justice conflicts with other values, those other values must yield. As such, justice is the foremost value from an egalitarian point of view. Doubtlessly, different standpoints exist, and an egalitarian framework cannot therefore go uncontested, not even respecting its core values.

Thus far, I have offered an outline of the concept of justice and its basic divisions. However, by this point the paper has merely achieved a reactivated prior understanding of the established egalitarian concept of justice. And yet I am interested here in the procedural and attitudinal preconditions of and requirements for justice, not just principles as such. In addressing these and other issues, I will use the concept of point of view as

an analytical tool. I therefore begin by shedding some light on features that are central to that concept.

Initial remarks on the concept of a point of view

Though the term *point of view* is used in everyday language and in science, its meaning remains ambiguous and unspecific. In its most concrete sense, *point of view* refers to the physical, spatial, and temporal position from which something is seen or viewed (Currie 2012, 88). Figuratively, it refers to the perspective from which a subject or event is perceived or a story narrated. This figurative meaning is closely related to another meaning, since a point of view can also refer to a person's state of mind or opinion (Lehtonen 2011, 244). A collective, such as a parliament or a municipal council, can also have an opinion and thus a point of view, at least in the sense of a voting result and a majority decision.

Though the meaning of *point of view* remains unclear, at least one common feature of its possible meanings is evident in the different uses of the expression "from *x*'s point of view"—namely that the term can act as a kind of operator for use as a prefix, as in the following sentences:

> From my point of view, this looks like a very good deal.
> From your point of view, the situation is very different.
> From the citizens' point of view, differences in living standards are increasing.
> From the children's point of view, the task which challenges them most is simply growing up.

The expression "from *x*'s point of view" indicates that the grounds for stating the sentence that follows are somehow restrictive and limiting. If a statement is made from a certain point of view, then not everything has been taken into account and not all relevant possibilities considered. By contrast, only certain aspects of an object are selected, depending on interests, aims, values, and background assumptions, among others (Hautamäki 1986, 63, 65, cf. Giere 2006, 81). Thus, points of view are interest-bound, which may give rise to conflicts of interest and even to injustice and inequality. It is evident that political decision-making, be it democratic or not, is always based on selected information, depending on the political interests, aims, and values of different parties, as well as on selected sources of information. Political decision-making thus always takes place from a certain perspective and for certain purposes. Therefore, the question of justice—or should we say the point of view of justice—is particularly relevant in politics.

Points of view involve intensional and culture-dependent elements—beliefs, background knowledge, and interests, to name a few—that influence how an object is seen or considered. These intensional elements also give rise to what Alasdair MacIntyre (2003, 352) calls the "perspective challenge", which questions the possibility of making truth claims from within any one tradition. The perspective challenge also entails a great uncertainty about whether the representatives of different traditions can understand each other at all. The perspective challenge thus emphasises the perspective-boundedness of cognitive endeavours.

MacIntyre contends that the perspective challenge depends on the following line of reasoning. All people live within some social and cultural tradition. They have grown into their own tradition, into its practices and institutions, and into its systems of belief, and they have adopted its account of justice and rationality. Their particular tradition is something they have accepted as a given and not acquired as a result of individual choice. As partakers of a tradition, they have no means of adopting general and timeless standards through which they could transcend the particularity of their situation or that of others (MacIntyre 2003, 350). MacIntyre crystallises this challenge as follows:

> If there is a multiplicity of rival traditions, each with its own characteristic modes of rational justification internal to it, then that very fact entails that no one tradition can offer those outside it good reasons for excluding the theses of its rivals (2003, 352).

The solution for perspectivists is to abandon the traditional meanings of *true* and *false*. Perspectivists also contend that, instead of seeing rival traditions as something exclusive and incompatible, they should be seen as different and complementary points of view concerning the realities they address (MacIntyre 2003, 352). For perspectivists, different traditions inhabit the same world but conceptualise and categorise it differently. It is as if different traditions form separate horizons of understanding from which general agreement and common standards of rationality and justice are doomed to remain unattainable.

Against perspectivists, MacIntyre suggests that one tradition can defeat another in terms of its ability to solve various epistemic, ethical, and social problems. Such a defeat is possible if one tradition reaches a more advanced stage of development and can prove its advancement by overcoming views previously held by both traditions or the rival tradition only. It follows that though no absolute or universal point of view exists, the perspective challenge is powerless against a tradition-bound form of inquiry (MacIntyre 2003, 364–368).

Thus for MacIntyre, the representatives of different traditions can benefit from other points of view. For most people, this occurs largely through translations (of books, journal articles, films, and other resources) and other second-hand information. Based on such information, people may see that other traditions cope better or worse with some issues than their own tradition. Despite being perspectival, selective and limited, such insight can still be realistic in the sense that it represents the reality of other traditions from the observer's point of view.

Based on this reasoning, MacIntyre firmly rejects attempts to invoke and develop a tradition-independent and universal form of inquiry. According to him, "it is an illusion to suppose that there is some neutral standing ground … which can afford rational resources sufficient for enquiry independent of all traditions" (MacIntyre 2003, 367). Suffice it to say, the history of hermeneutics and cultural studies shows that a good number of scholars such as Karl-Otto Apel have, on various grounds, held the opposite view.

For MacIntyre (2003, 367), the perspectivist "fails to recognize how integral the conception of truth is to tradition-constituted forms of enquiry". This failure is accompanied by the supposition that it is possible to switch the point of view between different traditions. However, MacIntyre holds that a multiplicity of traditions does not mean multiple perspectives between which we are free to switch, but only that it provides "a multiplicity of antagonist commitments, between which only conflict … is possible" (MacIntyre 2003, 367).

Although there is reason to agree with MacIntyre in many points, especially in his criticism of cultural relativism, I propose a view different from his: namely, that although it may be impossible to change all constituent elements of a tradition-based perspective in one undertaking, at least *some* elements can be changed incrementally. Thus, if my argument succeeds, the perspective challenge is at least partially solvable. This result is important in order to defend the possibility of a concept of justice that accounts for different cultural perspectives, not only formally, but also—and more importantly—in terms of cognitive and attitudinal content.

A component analysis of the concept of a point of view

Let us begin by identifying the constituent elements of a point of view. As a starting point, we can distinguish three main groups of elements: observer-oriented elements, object-oriented elements, and tools-oriented elements. In an observer-oriented concept of point of view, the following components can be distinguished: the observer; her or his spatial and tem-

poral position; the observer's social, cultural, political, economic, or alternative position (i.e. their situatedness); and the observer's mental attitude. Meanwhile, important observer-related and culture-dependent features of a point of view include the culturally-determined standards of truth, rationality, and consistency inherent in the tradition to which the observer belongs. These standards are controlling realities that regulate views and attitudes.

In an object-oriented concept of point of view, the following components can be distinguished: the object, its observable or conceivable features or properties, and the environment or context in which the object appears. Somewhere between an observer-oriented concept and an object-oriented concept is the tools-oriented concept of a point of view. I say *between*, because the subject and their background information are not only observer-related components of a point of view, but can also serve as tools of observation and introspection. The components of the tools-oriented concept include concepts, theories, methods, and approaches; all of which are chosen and used by the observer and, as such, depend on the observer.

The observer-oriented and object-oriented concepts are related, since the features relevant or important in an object under observation, or subject matter under discussion, are determined by factors related to the observer and their situation. Such variables include the observer's spatial and temporal location, knowledge, and interests, as well as their social, cultural, political, and economic positions. These variables also include the wider theme, context, and tradition of the discussion in question. This wider theme encompasses the subject matter of the discourse, while the tradition of the discourse provides the observational tools (e.g. concepts, metaphors, and theories) for the observer.

A synthetic, non-literal understanding of the term *point of view* refers to perception and linguistic thinking, which consists of many factors, some of which relate to the observing subject, while these and others can relate to the tools of observation and/or object of observation. These constituent elements and their propensity towards substitution by other elements are presented in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1: The constituent elements of a point of view and the possibilities for their replacement		
Observer-related factors	**Is it possible to substitute other elements of the same type**	
	from one's own tradition?	*from another tradition?*
The subject (i.e. observer, viewer, possessor) or type of subject	*Yes*	*Yes, if present and reachable*
The subject's interests, aims and values	*Maybe*	*Maybe*
The subject's mental attitude and state of mind (i.e. the 'colour' of the viewing)	*Maybe*	*Maybe*
The subject's background knowledge and expectations, including metaphysical commitments and ontological premises that direct the subject's modes of thinking and understanding	*Yes, to some extent*	*Maybe*
The subject's spatial and temporal situation (i.e. vantage point)	*Yes*	*Maybe*
The subject's cultural and historical context, including the culturally determined standards of truth, rationality and consistency	*Maybe, through the imagination*	*Maybe, through the imagination*
Tools-related factors		
Observational instruments (e.g. binoculars, telescope, microscope), the "tools of the trade"	*Yes*	*Yes*
The conceptual apparatus (including concepts, metaphors, models, theories, and frameworks) used by the subject	*Yes, to some extent*	*Maybe*
The method or approach to viewing	*Yes*	*Maybe*
The basis of viewing, the data (i.e. source material)	*Yes*	*Yes*
Object-related factors		
The object, subject matter or focus of a point of view	*Yes*	*Yes*
The object's features or properties	*Yes*	*Yes*
The environment or thematic context in which the object appears; the domain of discourse	*Yes*	*Yes, to some extent*

The table above expresses the conviction that the constituent elements of a point of view, or at least most of them, can be switched step by step, either by using the available resources of one's own tradition or by adopting elements from another. Such substitution requires relevant knowledge of the other tradition, as well as of one's own, adequate translations, and the ability both to imagine and to feel compassion. Though MacIntyre admits the possibility of such knowledge and sensitivity, he firmly denies the possibility of switching between the perspectives of different traditions (MacIntyre 2003, 368). However, as this paper has shown, there is reason to consider this firmness to be without basis.

Thus, MacIntyre stresses the tradition-boundedness of cognitive endeavours and the impossibility of switching the point of view between traditions. I have argued that even if it is impossible to change an entire point of view, some constituents—especially tools-related and object-related ones—of a point of view (e.g. concepts, models, methods, and so on) may be changeable.

If I am right here, the obstacles to a changing or developing point of view are practical, not principled. Observer-related factors such as the interests, aims, and values of the subject, as well as their mental attitude, are usually very resistant to change, as is the subject's cultural and historical context, including the culturally-determined standards of truth, justice, and rationality. However, if the person in question is creative and acquainted with another tradition to a relevant extent, they may also be able to change these factors, at least partly and temporarily, by an act of the imagination. It is important to note that one does not necessarily need to be committed to changing one's point of view. On the contrary, it is enough that one can imagine and understand what the reality would be if one or another component of their tradition and perspective were to differ from its actuality.

As for other traditions, we often commit the following intertwined perspective-related errors: misrepresentation, mistaken scales, and oversimplification. Any understanding is a brute misrepresentation if it claims that other traditions have properties or features that they do not in fact possess. Mistaken scale is a subtype of misrepresentations in which other traditions or some of their features are either exaggerated or downplayed. At the same time, understanding is an oversimplification if it fails to represent the fundamental properties or features of other traditions. As such, the real perspective challenge can be summed up as follows: how can a perspective be broadened and how can we look at other traditions from more than one point of view, yet begin from within our own tradition, in order to avoid or correct the errors of misrepresentation, exaggeration, underesti-